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FACT SHEET: WOMEN AND LABOUR UNIONS

CANADA

Since statistics on women's union membership have been available, THE UNIONIZATION OF WOMEN HAS BEEN INCREASING AT A FASTER PACE THAN FOR MEN EMPLOYEES.

Nationally, between 1962 and 1970, the number of women union members increased from 248,884 to 513,203 - an increase of 106.2 per cent. Over the same period, men's union membership increased by only 38.4 per cent - from 1,267,526 to 1,754,323 members.

Table 1 shows that the higher rate of unionization among women workers is more than a reflection of the general increase in the labour force participation of women. Between 1962 and 1970, the female work force (1) increased by 51.4 per cent, in contrast to the previously noted jump in their union membership of 106.2 per cent.

T A B L E 1

Labour Union Membership by Sex, Canada, 1962 and 1970

	1962	1970	Percentage Change - 1970 Over 1962
Male Membership	1,267,526	1,754,323	38.4
Female Membership	248,884	513,203	106.2
Total Membership	1,514,905	2,267,526	49.7
Female Membership as % of Total Membership	16.4	22.6	-
Male Work Force (Thousands)	3,431	4,399	28.2
Female Work Force (Thousands)	1,546	2,341	51.4
Total Work Force (Thousands)	4,978	6,740	35.4
Female Work Force as % of Total Work Force	31.1	34.7	-

Source: D.B.S., Labour Division, Labour Force Survey Section,
Special Tables - 12 Month Averages, 1962 and 1970,
Table 3(c).
Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, Annual Report of the
Ministry of Industry, Trade and Commerce under the Corporations
and Labour Unions Returns Act, 1970 (Part 11 Labour Unions)
Ottawa, Information Canada, March 1973, page 45.



ONTARIO

In Ontario, also, the number and proportion of women union members has increased significantly in recent years. The number of women unions members in the province increased from 95,140 in 1962 to 169,897 in 1970; a gain of 78.6 per cent. WOMEN'S SHARE OF TOTAL UNION MEMBERSHIP INCREASED FROM 14.7 TO 19.7 PER CENT DURING THIS PERIOD.

One-third (33.2 per cent) of all women union members in Canada live and work in Ontario. In this respect, Ontario ranks second to Quebec which has 39.6 per cent of all women union members.


Table 3 also shows that, in 1970 in Ontario, over half (57.8 per cent) of all women union members were in international unions, 23.2 per cent were in national unions, and 19.0 per cent in government employees' organizations. However, women were better represented in the national unions (34.1%) and the government organizations (30.1%), than in the international unions (15.3%). This is partly because the national unions and government organizations tend to represent white collar and service industries, whereas the international unions tend to represent heavy industry.

T A B L E 3

Female Union Membership By Type of Labour Organization, Ontario
1962 and 1970

Type of Union	Number and Percentage Distribution of Women Members				Women Members as Percentage of Total Membership	
	1 9 6 2		1 9 7 0		1962	1970
	Number	%	Number	%		
International Union	51,889	54.5	98,233	57.8	11.0	15.3
National Union	21,907	23.0	39,339	23.2	24.9	34.1
Government Employees' Organization	21,344	22.4	32,325	19.0	24.9	30.1
TOTAL - All Labour Organizations	95,140	100.0	169,897	100.0	14.7	19.7

Source: Ministry of Industry, Trade and Commerce.....op. cit, pages 51-52



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Correspondingly, women's share of total union membership increased from 16.4 per cent to 22.6 per cent between 1962 and 1970. However, women's representation in labour unions is still lower than their share of the total work force, which was 34.7 in 1970. i.e. ONE OUT OF EVERY THREE WORKERS IS A WOMAN, BUT LESS THAN ONE OUT OF EVERY FOUR UNION MEMBERS IS A WOMAN.

Table 2 shows that the majority of Canadian workers do not belong to unions and also, that PROPORTIONATELY FEWER WOMEN THAN MEN ARE UNIONIZED. In 1970, 21.9 per cent of women in the work force, and 39.9 per cent of men were union members. Here again, the gap between men and women appears to be closing, since female union members' share of the work force increased by 5.8 percentage points between 1962 and 1970, compared to only 3.0 points for men.

T A B L E 2

Union Members as a Percentage of the Work Force by Sex, Canada,
1962 and 1970

	1962	1970
<u>Male</u>		
Work Force	3,431,000	4,399,000
Union Members	1,267,526	1,754,323
%	36.9	39.9
<u>Female</u>		
Work Force	1,546,000	2,341,000
Union Members	248,884	513,203
%	16.1	21.9

Source: Ministry of Industry, Trade and Commerce....
op. cit. page 45

The increasing unionization of women employees can be linked to the rapid expansion of the tertiary sector of the economy, where recent union organization has been focused. The primary and heavy manufacturing industries, which employ a large proportion of men, are already well organized. Since the service and white collar industries are typified by a high proportion of women employees, any organization in these areas increases the number and proportion of women union members. In particular, the unionization of government employees has expanded the ranks of women union members significantly, since all levels of government are major employers of women.

T A B L E 4

Female Paid Workers, by Industrial Distribution and Union Membership,
Canada 1969

Industry	Female Paid Workers		Female Union Members		Female Paid Workers As % of Total Paid Workers	Female Union Members As % of Total Union Members
	Number	%	Number	%		
Manufacturing	405,000	17.6	147,763	31.5	22.7	19.0
Trade	393,000	17.1	23,908	5.1	36.5	25.0
Services	1,062,000	46.2	182,960	39.0	61.8	56.0
Transportation and Communications	107,000	4.7	44,721	9.5	16.3	12.7
Public Administration	121,000	5.3	64,735	13.8	25.5	19.7
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	168,000	7.3	3,342	0.7	51.1	42.8
T O T A L * All Industries	2,297,000	100.0	469,235	100.0	34.2	21.2

*Includes, agriculture, construction, forestry, fishing and trapping and primary industries with very few women workers

Source: Canada Department of Labour, Women's Bureau Women in the Labour Force 1971: Facts and Figures Ottawa, Information Canada, 1973

The above situation can be attributed to the still LOW DEGREE OF ORGANIZATION IN INDUSTRIES CHARACTERIZED BY HIGH PROPORTIONS OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES. Taking the three industries of trade (37% female), services (62% female), and finance (51% female), Table 5 illustrates the comparatively low level of unionization in these "female" industries, in comparison to the general level of unionization. It should be noted that men who work in these industries also have a low degree of union membership. It is therefore possible that the low level of unionization in these industries can be attributed to features such as small establishment size, which tends to inhibit organization, rather than to the sex-ratio itself (2)

T A B L E 5

Union Members as a Percentage of Paid Workers by Sex,
Canada, 1969

Industry	Women Members As % Of	Men Members As % Of	All Members As % Of
	Women Workers	Men Workers	All Workers
Trade	6.1	10.5	8.9
Services	17.2	22.0	19.0
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	2.0	2.8	2.4
All Industries	20.4	39.5	33.0

Source: Women in the Labour Force.....op. cit., Table 16

The Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (3) drew attention to the UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AMONG UNION LEADERS OR HIGH OFFICIALS. This observation is supported by data for 1970 (see Table 6), which shows that women only make up 9.8 per cent of all executive board members of unions.

T A B L E 6

Women Executive Board Members as Percentage of Total Executive Board Members, by Type of Union, Canada, 1970

Type of Union	Total Executive Board Members	Women	Women As % of Total
International	109	3	2.8
National	489	64	13.1
Government	247	16	6.5
T O T A L	845	83	9.8

SOURCE: Women in the Labour Force.....op. cit., Table 17

Footnotes

- 1) Unless otherwise noted, "work force" refers to non-agricultural paid workers, rather than to all paid workers, because agricultural employees are generally excluded from labour relations legislation.
 - 2) Bain, George Sayers The Growth of White-Collar Unionism
Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971 pages 40-43
 - 3) Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada,
Ottawa, Information Canada, 1970 pages 61-64
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Additional Readings

Canadian Union of Public Employees (C.U.P.E.) The Status of Women in CUPE A special report for the consideration of the CUPE national conference, Ottawa, September 1971.

Gelber, Sylva M. - "Which Side are You On?" Canadian Labour
May 1972 (re-printed in, Canada Department of Labour, Women's Bureau, Women's Bureau '72 Ottawa, Information Canada, 1973).

Geoffroy, Renee and Sainte-Marie, Paule - Attitude of Union Workers to Women in Industry Study No. 9 of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, Ottawa, Information Canada, 1971.

Landsberg, Michele "How Trade Unions Let Women Down" Chatelaine
March 1971.

Marchak, Patricia (University of British Columbia, Institute of Industrial Relations) Women Workers and White-Collar Unions
Paper presented to the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association, Montreal, May 1972 (mimeo).

WOMEN'S UNION MEMBERSHIP IS CONCENTRATED INTO A FEW UNIONS. Out of a total of 173 reporting labour organizations in Canada, 26 (15.0 per cent) had no women members, and women formed the minority of members in all but 30 (17.4 per cent) reporting organizations. 57.6 per cent of women union members belong to labour organizations where they are in the minority, while 42.4 per cent belong to unions where women make up more than half of the membership.

Labour organizations with 10,000 or more women members in 1970 included: -

Quebec Teachers' Corporation	(53,378)
Canadian Union of Public Employees	(49,983)
National Federation of Services	(38,389)
Public Service Alliance of Canada	(26,620)
Service Employees' International Union	(23,983)
International Ladies Garment Workers' Union	(16,995)
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America	(15,739)
Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America	(13,603)
Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia	(13,241)
Civil Service Association of Ontario	(11,981)
Alberta Association of Registered Nurses	(11,875)
Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America	(11,372)

Women were also well represented in unions connected with manufacturing of electrical goods, textiles, clothing, and steel; and in the retail trade, hospitality and communications industries.

National data for 1969, as presented in Table 4, shows that women's share of union membership parallels their share of employment in each industry, although at a consistently lower level. For instance, 61.8 per cent of all service employees are women, and 56.0 per cent of all union members in this industry are women.

However, the distribution of women union members by industry does not parallel their employment distribution consistently. In relation to their industrial distribution women are "over unionized" in manufacturing, communications, and public administration. For example, only 17.6 per cent of women paid workers are in the manufacturing industry, but 31.5 per cent of women union members work in manufacturing. Women are relatively "under unionized" in the trade, service, and finance industries. Although 7.3 per cent of all women paid workers are employed in the finance, insurance and real estate industry, less than one per cent of all women union members work in this industry.

